



Living Well

July 6-12 is Take Charge of Change Week

MANAGING CHANGE

Everyone reacts differently to life situations but we all have to cope with change. Like any skill, it takes practice but we can all learn to face change with less fear and more confidence.

Enduring the Unavoidable

Change is not always easy but it is inevitable. Some changes are more predictable than others; growing older, the birth of children, moving to a different house or city, the death of a parent, and retirement for example. Unexpected changes such as divorce, illness or changes in employment can be difficult - even painful or overwhelming.

Change is a process that becomes either positive or negative depending on how we react to it. Although it's easier said than done, people manage to survive and even thrive during times of extreme change. The following strategies may be helpful to keep a positive attitude and make the best of any situation.

Address Your Feelings

Change often involves loss and it is normal to experience feelings of sadness, grief or even anger and depression. There can also be frustrations as we struggle between holding on and letting go. Try not to ignore the situation or avoid the painful feelings. It is better to deal with uncomfortable feelings directly, especially with the support and encouragement of loved ones.

Take Stock of Your Strengths

Note the things that you do well - skills and qualities that cannot be taken away. The old saying, "When one door closes, another one opens" is often very true. This particular change may allow you to do things that you wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

Practice Positive Self Talk

Change often activates intense doubt. Rather than seeing change as an opportunity, we listen to the negative voices in our mind. "Nothing I do turns out right," "I can't handle this," "Everything is hopeless" are some common thoughts indicating self-doubt. It may be helpful to respond with gentle reminders of times you were effective in dealing with change, grew as a person, or tried something new - even though you were afraid.

Set Priorities

Make three lists: things that must be done, other things that clamor for your attention, and things that you enjoy doing. Remember to choose things from each list rather than just the list of things that you think "absolutely positively" must be done.

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Pay Attention to Your Body's Response to Change

Identify changes in your life and how they are affecting you. Recognize your own symptoms of stress and make a conscious effort to manage the stress before your symptoms lead to a serious physical condition.

Keep Your Sense of Humor

Even positive change is stressful. One of the best stress relievers is laughter. Clearly it is important to understand and deal with your feelings and the situation but don't underestimate the power of laughter to relieve tension. Talk to other people about your feelings, maybe even share a laugh or two.

If you are experiencing difficulty coping with change or other personal problems, contact SYMMETRY at (414) 256-4800 or (800) 236-7905 for confidential assistance.



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